

much more than ever I did; but that not
 being, it was
 no more to me than the next field, and only
 served me
 for a place to roam in without disturbance/

I confess that to preserve these letters I
 would gladly
 sacrifice all the haystacks and wagon-loads
 of theological and political controversy which that
 quarrelsome
 age produced, including the prose of Milton
 himself.²

Real grace like this is so rare a thing in
 English prose, as
 compared with French. It is extraordinary
 that the late
 Sir Walter Raleigh could write: 'We have no
 one in
 English to compare with Madame de
 Sevigne for the
 combination of wit and tenderness. Dorothy
 Osborne
 was an exceedingly amiable and admirable
 lady, full of
 sound sense, but if you take away from her
 letters that
 flavour of antiquity that gives a heightened
 interest to
 all her allusions and to her descriptions of
 the life of the
 time, you would have to admit that there are
 a thousand
 writers of letters alive today who equal or
 excel her.'
 We would admit no such thing. 'Amiable
 lady—flavour
 of antiquity'! It is a judgement worthy of Sir
 Justinian in,;
 person.

But there is another wider issue that these
 letters raise.
 How enormously, one feels after reading
 them, culture
 matters up to a certain point! And beyond
 that point,
 how little! Dorothy Osborne's charm is
 essentially that
 of a very delicate and sensitive personality,
 taught to

write by reading a few good books—the Bible, Shake-
speare, Cowley, and her beloved Jeremy Taylor. French
romances, like those of Mademoiselle de Scudery, she

²This blasphemy when first published brought an
indignant protest
from an admirer of Milton's prose. I am afraid I am
unrepentant
'Eagles mewing their mighty youth' are monstrous
fine; but I would
not give this charming human being for a
wilderness of mewing
eagles.